DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 887 EA 026 599

AUTHOR Davidson, Betty M.; Dell, Geralyn L.
TITLE Discovering the Meaning of Unity of Purpose: A Case Study of Fourteen Accelerated Schools.
PUB DATE Jan 95
NOTE 38p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (Dallas, TX, January 26, 1995).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acceleration (Education); Adoption (Ideas); Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Group Unity; Interprofessional Relationship; *Participative Decision Making; *Resistance to Change; School Based Management; School Community Relationship; *School Restructuring; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Behavior
IDENTIFIERS *Accelerated Schools; *Louisiana

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that examined how teachers restructuring schools came to understand the meaning of the term "unity of purpose." Fourteen Louisiana schools, comprised primarily of high-risk student populations, implemented the accelerated-schools model of restructuring. The accelerated school model is based on three principles: unity of purpose, empowerment coupled with responsibility, and building on strengths. Data were gathered from observations of and interviews with 70 teachers from 14 first-year accelerated schools, both rural and urban, across Louisiana. Teachers in the schools' taking-stock process exhibited similar behavior patterns. First, "doubting Thomases" imperiled the development of group unity and program success. Second, the process created opportunities for school staff to communicate and reflect. Committee meetings, surveys, networks, and reflective practices helped teachers gain information, share ideas, express concerns, and develop trust. Third, internal and external divisions threatened group unity. Some of the divisions arose from perceptions of core teachers as elitist, lack of understanding about the project, confusion about the term "empowerment," indifference, pressures for gains in student achievement scores, differences of opinion about curriculum and instruction, isolation, racial misunderstandings, and concerns of teacher autonomy. Finally, reflection was a key factor in healing and reducing conflict. One table is included. (Contains 19 references.) (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 380 887

DISCOVERING THE MEANING OF UNITY OF PURPOSE: A CASE STUDY OF FOURTEEN ACCELERATED SCHOOLS

Betty M. Davidson
University of New Orleans

and

Geralyn L. Dell
University of New Orleans

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

B. Davidson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 026 599

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, Dallas, TX, January 26, 1995.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the behavioral patterns of teachers involved in the first year of a restructuring process. The qualitative research method was used to created a portrait of how 14 schools came to understand the meaning of the concept "unity of purpose." The accelerated schools model was the vehicle for restructuring.

Discovering the Meaning of Unity of Purpose:

A Case Study of Fourteen Accelerated Schools

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, school sites have operated in a hierarchial, top-down manner. In this scenario, the principal, teachers, and staff work in isolation of each other. As a result, there is little or no connection between what happens in a classroom, grade level, or for that matter, on a school wide level. Teachers act in the roles of implementators of policies handed down from school districts and principals. As the Accelerated Schools Newsletter (1994, Fall) purports, "This lack of participation leads to isolation as school members become separated in purpose, focus, and action" (p. 1).

In this hierarchial context, there tends to be little innovative experimentation from teachers, principal, and staff to work as a cohesive unit to make changes in school organization and curriculum from within the school. Murphy (1991) states that, "Restructuring...involves fundamental alterations in the relationships among the players involved in the educational process" (p. 15). Focusing on these relationships provides an understanding of the events, situations, and experiences of teachers as they change their schools from a traditional learning environment to an accelerated one.

The accelerated schools process provides a systematic approach to the restructuring of schools. Developed in 1986 by Henry M. Levin, Professor of Economics and Education at Stanford

University, this strategy has the overall purpose of creating the best schools for all children so that every child has the opportunity to succeed as a creative, critical, and productive member of our society. The success of the project is closely linked to meaningful high levels of parent involvement, school-based management, innovative uses of community resources, and the development of a reliable mechanism of cooperative decision making. The Accelerated Schools Project differs from other school reform interventions because it provides a process for the members of the school community to become more aware of their existing school culture and to make the change they desire in the school culture.

Changes in accelerated schools are "not just created, but sustained and nurtured as participants engage in a deliberate process of implementation and problem-solving" (Accelerated Schools Newsletter, Fall, 1994, p. 11). During implementation of the accelerated schools process, all members of the school community become engaged in continuous participation, collaboration, reflection, discussion, and practice. As a result, the school community builds the capacity to take new risks and evaluate situations "based not on how things have always been done, but on what is responsive to the needs of the school and the students they serve (Accelerated Schools Newsletter, Fall, 1994, p. 11).

As each school begins its journey in the accelerated schools process, it also begins to build the capacity for the transition

in the transformation process. Crucial in this capacity building is the understanding that all school community members become united in their efforts to develop a common set of goals with the focus on bringing all children into the educational mainstream so that they can fully benefit from learning experiences. This means that members of the school community cannot isolate themselves from each other and the concerns of one another.

The journey in the process of this transformation is exciting because of the powerful ideas generated by the school community. The quest for educational change begins with the "taking stock" phase of the Accelerated Schools Project (Levin, 1991). It is during this phase that everyone in the school community works together to explore all facets of the school in order to provide a comprehensive portrait of the school while incorporating the three principles: unity of purpose among all staff, parents, students, and the local community; empowerment coupled with responsibility for shared decision-making; and building on strengths of students, staff, parents, and community through the use of a gifted and talented pedagogy and moving toward development of a unified vision (Levin, 1992).

The initial phase of a restructuring process involves teachers discovering that their relationships with one another become central to building a unity of purpose. The nucleus of this study deals specifically on how teachers and school administrators came to understand the meaning of the concept of unity of purpose.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Eisner (1991), a portrait of qualitative research can provide new insights and understandings into the educational setting. Researchers can become connoisseurs and critics to "see" the total picture as a portrait of what is transpiring in the school and classroom in order to describe, understand, and interpret thoughts, events, and feelings.

Connoisseurship

Connoisseurship requires the researcher to strive to be an expert in acquiring first hand access and some degree of in-depth knowledge of the educational phenomena one seeks to understand. It also requires the researcher to have some self-consciousness about one's own learning and a heightened awareness of the peculiarities of the educational situation in order to make fine grained, discriminating perceptions of the school and classroom life (Flinders, 1987).

As an educational connoisseur in this study, the researchers took on the role of artists and inquirers in the art of appreciating the subtleties in the situations for learning. Eisner (1991) claims the educational connoisseur is similar to a wine connoisseur. The wine connoisseur is able to know the background of the wine as well as the types of grapes and is able to distinguish the fine differences in taste, smell, and all the other qualities of the wine. As the researchers in this study holistically viewed the qualities in the classroom that contributed to the total picture, they tried to determine the

underlying and subtle meanings in the experiences of people striving to achieve a unity of purpose.

According to Lightfoot (1983), "The creative and analytic task of portraiture lies in exploring and describing these competing and dissonant perspectives, searching for their connections to other phenomena, and selecting the primary pieces of the story line for display" (p. 15). The piecing together of the portrait has the elements of building a puzzle or weaving a quilt. The pieces of the story told from the classroom also must be woven together. According to Eisner (1991), researchers can become critics to "see" the total picture as a portrait of what is transpiring in the school and classroom in order to describe, understand, and interpret thoughts, events, and feelings. The researchers, assuming the role of artists and inquirers, used the concept of portraiture to guide the study.

Developing the Portrait

Developing a portrait of a school, Eisner (1991) utilizes five dimensions of schooling--intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative--as guidelines to "see" the total picture of what is transpiring in the school and classroom. In this study only two of the five dimensions were employed as guides to explore the educational environment and to create a portrait for viewing how teachers and principals build the capacity for restructuring their schools. In the view of the researchers, the two dimensions--intentional and structural relate to the concept of unity of purpose. These two dimensions

particularly relate to the process in which teachers and principals examine their values, beliefs, and practices.

The intentional dimension focuses on the goals, aims, espoused values, and the "in-use" practices that are advocated by the principal and teachers. According to Argyris, Putman, and Smith (1987), the espoused values refer to what individuals claim they believe and would do in certain situations; the "in-use" practices refer to those actions or behaviors that actually are taken in those situations.

The structural dimension examines the environment and organization of the classroom and school. In the structural dimension, the researcher, as the connoisseur, considers such features as the flexibility of time blocks and scheduling, grading structure, teachers' lesson plans, and preparation time. Eisner (1991) refers to Goodlad and Anderson (1959) who point out that these features may have an important influence on how classrooms facilitate the attainment of the values that a school may hold for children and how learning occurs.

This paper provides a portrait of the 14 schools involved in building the capacity for changing the traditional learning environment to an accelerated one. Each school was viewed through the lenses of two of Eisner's (1991) five dimensions of schooling to determine if the school was operating at a surface level without a clear understanding of the principles of accelerated schools and without a clear understanding of the rationale of the change.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the behavioral patterns of teachers involved in the first year of a restructuring process. During the initial phase of this process, teachers discover that their relationships with one another become central to building a unity of purpose to restructuring their schools. Using the qualitative approach builds an understanding of this nexus--the interconnection between teachers' relationships, unity of purpose, and school restructuring.

METHODS AND DATA SOURCE

In order to provide a holistic description, interpretation, and understanding of the behavioral patterns, the case study approach was employed. The methodology included interviews and observations of 70 teachers from 14 first-year accelerated schools, both rural and urban, across the state of Louisiana. These schools were primarily comprised of at-risk students. Eight schools began the accelerated schools process in the 1991-1992 school year; six schools initiated the process in the 1992-1993 school year. The qualitative research was conducted by the Accelerated Schools Project team members from the University of New Orleans (UNO).

Ongoing observations and interviews with principals and teachers during the schools first year in the Accelerated Schools Project provided avenues for the researchers to use all their senses to capture the essence of the human qualities and situations that interacted with each other in the schools and

classrooms. Themes began to emerge as researchers carefully examined data from both the obvious and subtle behaviors of the teachers and principals. The stories, examples, and incidents occurring inside and outside the schools and classrooms from the years 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 were compared and contrasted. Such patterns of behaviors allowed the researchers to paint the portrait of the 14 schools.

FINDINGS

As the researchers began to analyze the data, the pieces of the phenomena were woven together. The resulting portrait illuminated that beliefs, attitudes, and habits of routine were slow to change. The tensions built up over years causing walls of divisions were not easily alleviated. However, as the process began to take hold principals and teachers began to listen, talk, and reflect with each other giving them opportunities for communicating and sharing. Only after principals, teachers, and staffs began to practice the three principles and values at an in-use level did an understanding of the process of accelerated schools develop. As this understanding developed, principals and teachers began to pursue the pathways of change through a unity of purpose. The following patterns of behavior represent those successes and trials as the capacity for change was established.

Ground Work for Involvement and Collaboration

Upon entering the 14 schools in the two years of research, the UNO team members experienced the energy and enthusiasm of the

children, faculty, and staff. Something "special" was going on in the schools. The "specialness" as indicated from the interviews was the attempt of most people to get on board the accelerated schools train. Involvement of the total school community is critical because it is the school that generates its own design and process for change. Levin (1992) purports that the process differentiates the Accelerated Schools Project from other movements because it is generated from collaboration and involvement within the school.

Information about accelerated schools was first introduced to faculty and staff members as well as parents by enthusiastic teachers and principals who attended a training session in the summer of 1991 or 1992. These people, usually called the "core members" and considered the in-school experts, organized initial meetings at their schools before or right after the fall semester began. The manual, compiled and distributed by the UNO team, was cited as their resource guide to present information to the teachers. Skits, plays, and hands-on activities that core members had observed during the training were presented to teachers who had not been trained. Some schools had all day workshops during which they shared the three principles, values, and information. It was evident that core members went back to their schools and took great time and care in presenting the information about the three principles and process.

Generally, all core teachers were enthusiastic about sharing the experiences that helped them to understand the process. A

core teacher who went to one of the summer training sessions commented about the understanding of the concepts she received: "...(T)hat workshop [training] really opened my eyes toward a better understanding--it was a real nice breakdown of everything that we would have to do to get started." Another teacher said, "We all met and we shared what we thought we had learned in the summer training. We tried to relate what we learned."

Other core members revealed that in order to train teachers at the first on-site school meeting, they showed videos, prepared program outlines, and engaged in hands-on activities that they had experienced at one of the initial training sessions. Another core member reported, "When we went to the [summer] training, we were able to do exercises that were designed to give us some ideas and activities to help our staff understand the process." The teacher also commented that team leaders from UNO worked closely with the core teachers on exercises for the meeting. In all the interviews, there were indications that core teachers worked collaboratively to prepare for the first on-site training. All teachers tried to work with the core members even if they were not believers that the project could be applied to their situation. During on-site training, foundations were being laid for involvement and collaboration.

Working with the "Doubting-Thomas" Teachers

The teachers who did not have the opportunity to attend a summer training were at a disadvantage. They were not able to be recipients of the continuity of the UNO team presentations and

activities. The collegiality and support of the other teachers from around the state were not available to teachers at the school site. Due to time limitations at the beginning of the school year, merely an introduction to the accelerated schools process was possible. As a result of these factors, the full impact of the three principles and process was not attained by those teachers, staff, and parents who had not attended the summer trainings. The interviews indicated that teachers who had not attended the summer trainings were leery about the effectiveness of the accelerated schools process for several reasons. Many had seen programs come and go like fads. Others were anxious about the project equating into more work. And still others just could not seem to conceive that they were going to get real opportunities to voice their opinions without being intimidated by other teachers and the administration. Some teachers were afraid to try something new. And finally, some of the core teachers were looked upon as intruders into well-established traditional methods and customs at the schools.

Consequently, doubts remained from some of the core teachers as to how to train colleagues back at the home school. One could hear during the interviews of the core teachers that they were sincere about their new project. Their comments revealed that they tried everything they had learned. One special education core teacher said:

> We all met and we shared what we thought we had learned....We tried to relate what we had learned.

> We did hear a lot of teachers say that it doesn't make sense or I don't understand it. Just how do you do it?

A first grade core teacher described the method used in preparing for their first school based training meeting in this way:

> We felt our way through it by reading our manual that we got at the training. No one really knew if we were doing right or not. We just tried to follow the book to see if we were heading in the right direction.

The teacher later said that they then contacted their site coordinator from UNO for leadership. Many of the core teachers related the same feelings about the prospect of training their own cohorts. One teacher said, "We had fun at the initial training....Our anxiety was up when we had to give our presentation and decide how to do it. We were not as relaxed at our school as [we were at the training]." Another core teacher said, "Even though some of us went to [the] training, we still didn't feel comfortable in explaining the process to the whole faculty."

On the surface, the accelerated schools process would seem to be a risky enterprise at many schools because of the "Doubting Thomas" teachers. However, the negative attitudes that seemed to be present were actually signs that were conducive to accelerated schools taking root for the following reasons. First, teachers were empowered to ask questions and explain the reasons for their

doubts, and, secondly, teachers were becoming aware that the project was not only different but intriguing enough to give the process a chance. Teachers were listening, thinking, and reflecting on their present situations. In this way teachers were actually beginning to build the capacity for educational change in their schools. Doubts raised through open questioning were important and positive signs because they acted as a catalysts for teachers to find out more about the process. Freire and Faundez (1989) speaking of the importance of learning to question as a means of sharing both knowledge and power said, "In teaching, questions have been forgotten. Teachers and students alike have forgotten them, and, as I understand it, all knowledge begins from asking questions" (pp. 34-35).

Participation in Taking-Stock Process

Everyone participated in the taking stock process by using the knowledge they received in training meetings. Even if the three principles were not completely understood or internalized yet, parents, teachers, principals, and even the students, actively participated in some way to become aware of the strengths and weaknesses in all facets of the school. School members involved themselves by forming committees. The committees were self-selected groups, randomly assigned groups, or mixed groups by priorities of school concerns.

All schools brainstormed areas of concern and then categorized and prioritized these concerns. Some of the major areas of concern were parental involvement, student discipline,

school climate, and curriculum and instructional processes. Many schools made special provisions in order that parents could be involved in committee meetings. One teacher said, "We kind of went along with the parents when they felt they would be able to come." Students also became involved as they answered surveys and questionnaires about areas of concern and interest. Bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers were asked for their input. The fact that there was overall participation in the taking-stock process was a positive movement in the transition to the Accelerated Schools Project. School members were for the most part at least willing to begin opening the doors for change by taking a critical look at their schools.

Opportunities Through

Committees found that the taking stock process was conducive to viewing challenges as opportunities in the change toward being accelerated. This helped to develop a sense of unity in the school. These opportunities were advantageous for several reasons.

First, everyone was willing to participate in the research for the taking stock process. Even though some members of the school community were still harboring doubts, they got involved in activities such as conducting surveys, attending meetings, organizing meetings with parents and students, and compiling information. Most meetings were after school hours so this required a special effort to rearrange personal and family commitments. Some committees even met during holidays and at

nights at each other's homes. Some teachers were innovative in networking with each other to meet during class time by rescheduling or by using students, volunteer parents, and paraprofessionals to help monitor classes while they met. One teacher was using a peer-tutoring approach to provide a meeting time. Her fifth grade special education students were peer tutoring young students from another grade. She had this to say:

> The special education students were very-proud to do this while the two teachers met in the class to discuss survey information. By meeting during class time the teachers were able to involve their parents in the cadre meeting also. As a result of this partnership experiment, the peer tutoring became a regular project for the special education students.

Based on the documentation from the interviews, teachers did want to be involved in the process. A principal observed, "Well, for one thing the teachers are willing to participate in the life of the school in a more extended way than we have allowed them to be."

Secondly, the taking stock process was advantageous because it offered opportunities for reflection of self, the students, and the school. As a consequence of the reflection, a deeper awareness and understanding of each other began to gradually develop. A lower grade teacher indicated:

> From working with the teachers, we really did get to know each other. We learned that they had a

wide variety of interests. I found that we needed more in this process and that we really need to get together more.

Other teachers felt that reflection gave them a sense of direction. One new teacher said:

> It has helped me certainly. I got a good feel of what the school was like and what my co-workers were like. It lets you know where you are in terms of knowing other people's philosophy.

A principal reiterated this, saying, "We are right now. We are trying to find out where we are, what we have in place, and what we really need to work on."

Some teachers realized that reflecting was a way to get in touch with themselves. One teacher speaking in a positive manner commented, "By of yourself, you try to get a feel of where you stand and where you need to make improvements." And yet another very insightful teacher realized that reflection was a path to begin finding reasons for tension in the school. She said:

> We took a good look at our school's situation....I think before we started, we took stock of ourselves...we aired out all of our opinions so that we knew the personalities before we got started. I think it aired a lot of the hard feelings that we had been harboring.

Throughout the interviews it became evident that teachers and principals were engaged in a process of reflecting by means

of the taking stock process. This reflection is a very positive part of as it begins to lead to communication and eventually lays the foundation for collaboration.

Wellington (1991) calls attention to reflective practice saying, "Reflective practice, like a tenacious windflower in the city, vibrates with vitality, raising our awareness and calling us from passivity to action" (p. 4). Through reflection the school members began to publicly test their ideas and opinions. In this way there was a healthy "unfreezing" taking place. Argyris, Putnam, and Smith (1987) used the concept of "unfreezing" as a path for people to freely express themselves. The "unfreezing" process can create a foundation for understanding. Bennis (1989) encourages reflection as a path to profile learning from each other because the virtues of trust, honesty, and integrity are developed.

A third opportunity that developed through the taking stock process was the establishment of a bond of trust and understanding among the faculty and staff members. These bonds were created from reflecting and collaboratively working together. A teacher explained the importance of saying:

> A bond of trust has developed being able to say things, take a risk saying things and not being misunderstood....I've seen a lot of participation from the group I worked with and the teachers (the majority) are beginning to bond.

The word trust was heard many times during the interviews. Trust was an important thread in building unity. Some felt that empowerment was built on trust. While others believed that building trust was a link to involvement and participation.

Finally, another advantage of as a result of building bonds of trust was teachers moving from isolation in their own cliques, grade levels, and classrooms to interaction, sharing and communication. When one teacher was asked about this interaction, the response was, "Yes, I think there has been more interacting, even sharing ideas in the faculty lounge--talking about teaching strategies. We have come to a deeper understanding. People are trying to approach one another."

Healing Divisions Through Team Spirit

Research conducted by the UNO teams in both 1992 and 1993 found a pattern of tension, conflict and discontent, resulting in internal divisions within first year schools. These divisions, which were long-standing, were on the mend due to the voluntary team-building spirit created by the accelerated schools training and taking-stock process. Maeroff (1993) found that many times cynicism and resentment can be the consequence of teachers having to attend mandated workshops or in-services. He also contends that one way to instigate change is through building voluntary teams through self-select training, not mandated training. Maeroff states that, "Team building of this sort raises the possibility that education might be improved by the formation of

a nucleus of committed people in each school, people prepared to take risks inside and outside their own classrooms" (p. 513).

The difference in building the team spirit between the Accelerated Schools Project and other traditional in-services and workshops is the freedom of choice to belong to accelerated schools, attend training sessions, and self-selected committees. This meant for first year schools that the school communities of parents, teachers, staff, and administrators wanted to make a commitment to be change agents through team spirit.

Internal and External Divisions

The team spirit has had a gradual evolution from tension or conflict to the beginning of unity. Interviews and observations from both years indicated there were internal and external divisions or factions.

Internal divisions within the schools were among teachers, principals, central offices, and students. External divisions were between the schools and the communities. Several reasons for tensions and conflicts were described by teachers. First, the core teachers were considered to be intruders or perhaps elitists. A third grade teacher who had gone to one of the summer training sessions described her feelings in this way, "...(S)ome of the teachers that had been here [at the training] felt as though we were intruders or we were invading." According to Maeroff (1993), often teachers who want to be change agents after returning to the school from workshops or inservices are

considered to be intruders. These teachers may feel isolated and divided from their colleagues.

Second, in some schools tension was present because the teachers who did not attend one of the summer training sessions did not understand the Accelerated Schools Project and were impatient with the slow process of taking stock. A "rookie" core teacher was concerned that many teachers in her school wanted a "quick-fix" for problems. She continued, "The other members who don't get involved with it [accelerated schools] don't understand that this first year is not for solving any problem....They want a quick-fix to the different problems--to parent involvement, to test scores."

Third, the meaning of the word empowerment seemed to cause confusion and conflict among teachers and principals. A principal related that he does empower, but there were certain areas in which he had to make the decisions. He said, "You do empower; you do delegate certain responsibilities to them." He further explained there were restraints that prevented a principal from delegating at all times or allowing teachers to do certain things because of parish politics. A veteran teacher also revealed that some teachers had problems with the interpretation of empowerment.

Fourth, there was an indifferent approach by those who had not gone to the summer trainings. Many of these teachers took the stand that the core teachers should do all the work. A young core teacher replied, "It seems like ever since then [summer

training], it's the same people who do everything. A lot of people want it [the school] to change, but they don't want to go through the steps to change it." Fifth, sometimes core teachers were accused of joining committees with their friends and thus strengthening the cliques. A very disheartened teacher said, "This was demeaning ....It was a slap in the face."

Sixth, tension was caused by pressure on the teachers and principals from central offices to increase standard test scores. Some schools were finding that teachers were having problems cooperating and collaborating to build the Accelerated Schools Project because of the demands being placed on them from central offices. Teachers were having difficulty concentrating on strengths and weaknesses of the schools when they were so preoccupied by worries of accountability and raising test scores.

Seventh, conflict existed between teachers and students because students wanted more opportunities for input, fun kinds of learning, and participation. Finally, isolation on upper and lower grade levels and special education classes kept faculties from communicating. A special education teacher laughed when she commented, "I tell them to come and visit me on this island."

External divisions were caused by consolidation in some schools. Again, the feeling of isolation caused a wall to build between teachers from different school communities now housed within the same building. In one school consolidation, problems seems to be disappearing. A happy teacher said, "Opening up with others caused the barrier of the wall to fall."

Parents not feeling wanted also became isolated from coming to the school. In some cases, they felt that the "open-door" policy was just lip service. Sometimes parents did not feel needed or worthwhile. A special education teacher, who had not been to the training, was very insightful in saying,

> A lot of parents want to feel needed at the school and they are not given the opportunity. This is just from that parent committee--the ones that were there speaking they don't feel welcome even though we say we have an "open door" policy and tell them to come if they have a problem.

The research indicated that in all schools some form of tension and conflict was present. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students were saying they thought accelerated schools was an exciting and meaningful project to help make beneficial changes, but they were having difficulty, particularly in the beginning of the year, practicing what they espoused.

Closing the Gaps Through Reflection

Very evident in the research was the fact that reflection was a key factor throughout the taking stock process. Reflection, as previously mentioned in the study, was creating the path to close the gaps between what was just being espoused by school committees and their actual practices. This key factor was proving to be crucial in healing the wounds and mending the divisions internally and externally for first year schools.

Literature supports the data found in this research that reflection can cultivate a change in attitudes and behaviors. Canning (1991) reported:

> Teachers found that reflection was an intrapersonal experience leading to insight about themselves as actors in their worlds. It prompted changes in self-concept, changes in perception of an event or a person(s), or plans for a change in some behavior. (p. 21)

The majority of principals and teachers interviewed believed that by looking closely into themselves and the school in the taking stock process, channels for understanding and communication were opening. Interviewees for the most part indicated that through reflection they were able to take more risks in communicating their strengths and their weaknesses as well as the school's strengths and weaknesses. Trust and confidence developed through the openness of expression the taking stock process provided. Bennis (1989) argues, "True understanding comes from reflecting on your experience, (p. 56).

According to Schon (1985), through reflection one gets a feeling for a situation which leads him or her to a particular course of action. Teachers, parents, and principals in the accelerated schools were beginning to explore reasons for their tensions and seeking alternatives for solutions.

Signs of Healing

Several signs of healing on the school and community levels became evident from the data collected during the interviews. First, at the school level, teachers generally were becoming freer to take on more responsibility and make choices based on reflection about unity and empowerment. A counselor responded about the principal in this way, "She [principal] is aware that she has to give a little more responsibility. Being freer to think about what to do and organize these things and do these things is important to us." She continued saying, "...I know that some teachers really want to step forward and start thinking differently, but they will need a little more leeway to do it and make a few mistakes along the way."

Second, teachers were freer to take risks to communicate and seek out alternatives for a change in the situation. Situations that had caused them to become "self-sealant" because they were afraid to take the risk to openly express themselves were transformed into situations whereby they began to interact. A teacher assistant, who had not attended the summer training on the interaction from meetings, commented:

> With this openness, more people feel a part of the school. [Teachers] are a lot more open than they used to be. There was not as much sharing before. Now I mix in with the eighth grade teacher, the fourth grade teacher, the principal, and the parents.

A second grade veteran teacher from another school who also had not gone to a summer training commented about the importance of communicating feelings of dissension in her school. She found the courage in her committee to say:

> Let's be honest. If your feelings get hurt, don't go and talk with someone else about it and let it fester and be angry with this person and the other person doesn't know why.

The teacher continued by saying why she thought this approach did work in her committee:

> I think it aired a lot of the hard feelings that we had been harboring--we got it all out--by questioning things. It really helped. This program is able to dig up that kind of stuff (referring to arguments during cadre meetings). Sometimes you have to go through that before you can clear the air.

Third, issues that at one time were not able to be discussed were brought to the surface. One third grade core teacher described a situation which she felt was causing tension. But the committee meetings gave them opportunities to come together. She said:

> We threw things around to find out where we were. We were trying to see whether or not we had some good points and bad points and we put everything together. There was some unrest, but once we got into these groups we began to talk about ourselves and the

> school...I could feel the tension begin to leave and we found ourselves smiling, sharing, and caring about the school especially.

Argyris and Schon (1974) contend that by bringing tensions to the surface, dysfunctional groups become groups where unity provides educational change.

At one school the principal arranged to have a program for teachers who were very divided because of consolidation. The program called "True Colors" was a way of bringing a dysfunctional school together. Each teacher chose a color that best portrayed his or her personality and strengths. The teacher interviewed explained the benefits of the program for the school:

> The colors were able to make you all aware that even though you would choose a different color because it was representative, you found out that you had the same interests.

The teacher said she was amazed that they had all shared the same ambitions and were conscientious about trying to do a good job for the children--"It was a fun way of breaking that wall." Since the program there has been more interaction at the school.

Fourth, at the community level, there was abundant evidence that through reflection teachers and principals became aware that parents wanted to participate. The majority of parents had been slow to get involved but that was gradually changing because they felt more accepted. An interview with a principal indicated that

parents were elated to know they could do something to help. He said:

> In the process we have had Chapter I teachers come in and work with all parents. It was so good. Chapter I conducted a workshop--helping them, telling them things that they could do to help the children.

He continued:

> I find that through the accelerated schools process I have gotten to meet more people in the community--more people coming in and working with us. We have involved everybody in the school. Our lunchroom workers are very, very close with us. We have several of them attend our meetings. Some are parents and grandparents of our children. Some are working as a staff.

Fifth, the vision statements from the first year schools were indicative of the commitment to involve the community. The process used in formulating the vision required the input from, all members of the school as a whole. The teachers and administrators have become more aware that the strengths of the community are invaluable in the success of the Accelerated Schools Project. The enthusiasm of students for the project has increased in most schools because they are getting the opportunity to get involved. Children felt important when teachers at one school made individual calls and sent personal invitations to parents for a special activity the teacher was having in the class.

Vision celebrations presented an ideal time for schools to invite mayors, city council members, school board members, business partners, parents, and family members. These celebrations were ways for healing to begin as the community and school could begin to interact and see the exciting things going on at the schools.

In summary, evidence indicates the capacity for healing has begun with teachers--and administrators reflecting on their own values and behaviors. The openness with each other and an awareness and understanding of working collaboratively are important for unity of purpose to be embraced and implemented into their everyday lives at the schools. Closing the gaps between what is espoused and what is actually practiced needed to be linked to closing the gaps between divisions inside and outside the school community. In doing this, there was true unity of purpose with a common vision for all. Davidson (1992) sees the vision serving as a "...unifying framework for all curricular, instructional, and organizational endeavors" (p. 72). Levin (1992) reinforces this by saying, "We start by changing the behavior...then--as the school begins to succeed--it takes on a life of its own" (p. 23).

EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Conclusion--Patterns of First Year Schools

Schools engaged in the taking stock process in 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 were found to have many similar behavior patterns. These patterns emerged as a result of schools espousing and

practicing at an "in-use" level the three principles of the Accelerated Schools Project. A summary of patterns observed in the first-year schools is presented below (see Table 1). The patterns will be categorized in the themes that emerged from the data.

Insert Table 1 about here

There was substantial evidence that all the school communities initiated the taking stock process in good faith by conducting in-services, workshops, and meetings. Core members worked diligently to explain the process using information that they had obtained in training meetings.

The key issue throughout the entire process was whether or not the three principles were being espoused and practiced by everyone and not just those who had gone to training. If the process was not widely accepted and understood by everyone then it would be doomed to failure. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) argue that it is possible to change "on the surface" without understanding the principles and rationale of the change. But in order for change to really take hold on a long-term basis and be successful in creating a new culture, the school communities' values and beliefs must become part of them.

The road was difficult for many teachers who were new in this process. There were teachers who could be called "Doubting Thomases." There were several reasons for the lack of total unity

in the belief of the process. Some teachers who had not gone to the training did not understand the process. Others had seen many reforms come and go like fads. Still others felt that they did not have time for more work. These doubts were perceived, however, as positive, because teachers wanted to know more about the process. Attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors slowly began to change through communication and reflection during taking stock meetings. Faculties and staffs had opportunities to share knowledge, ideas, and concerns. Taking stock was conducive to opening doors for total school involvement.

Many opportunities for schools to communicate and reflect arose through the process. First, the committee meetings, surveys, and brainstorming helped schools to gain information about their strengths and weaknesses. Second, networking among teachers on all grade levels was advantageous for sharing of innovative ideas, airing out of concerns, and just getting to know each other better. Third, through reflection, bonds of trust and understanding were established. These bonds were conducive to uncovering reasons for tensions in schools as well as for healing the divisions caused by tensions and conflicts.

Research conducted in the 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 school years showed that signs of internal and external unrest caused divisions among the schools as a whole. The internal divisions were within schools among faculties and staffs. The external divisions were between the communities and schools. Several

reasons for divisions became apparent during interviews. These reasons documented in the data are summarized here:

1. Perceptions of core members as elitist groups and the presence of cliques.
2. Lack of understanding about the taking-stock process and the project.
3. Confusion about the term empowerment.
4. Attitudes of indifference about the process.
5. Pressures of increasing test scores from central offices and principals.
6. Difference of opinions about curriculum and instructional processes.
7. Isolation among faculty, staff, and parents.
8. Consolidation and resulting racial unrest and misunderstanding.
9. Beliefs that administrators were not supportive enough to allow for teachers' autonomy.

Evidence of healing and closing the gaps of divisions began through reflection times provided by the process. Individuals were enabled to become aware of their attitudes and behaviors that were perpetuating dysfunctional learning and teaching environments. Therefore, school communities had opportunities throughout the process to understand the difference between just giving "lip service" to the process and actually working collaboratively at the in-use level to make change possible at some point.

The portrait painted by this study revealed that the phase of the accelerated schools process began to build the capacity for restructuring schools. Widespread involvement and establishing avenues of communication opened up paths for creating reflective relationships between teachers, principals, and staffs. Such relationships brought about an erosion in the foundation of the wall of conflicts and tensions resulting in creating a unity of purpose.

REFERNECES

Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & Smith, D. A. (1987). Action Science. San Francisco: Josşey Bass.

Argyris, C. & Schon, D. A. (1974). Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Bennis, W. (1989). On becoming a leader. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Canning, C. (1991). What teachers say about reflection. Educational Leadership, 48(6), 18-21.

Eisner, E. (1991). The enlightened eye. New York: Macmillan.

Davidson, B./ M. (1992). Building school capacity to accelerate learning: A study of restructuring processes in four elementary schools. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). New Orleans, LA: University of New Orleans.

Flinders, D. (1987). What teachers learn from teaching: Educational outcomes of instructional adaptation. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Stanford, CA: Stanford University.

Freire, P., & Faundez, A. (1989). Learning to question: A pedagogy of liberation. New York: Continuum Publishing Co.

Fullan, M. & Stiegelbauer, S. (1991). The new meaning of educational change. New York: Teachers College Press.

Goodlad, J., & Anderson, R. (1959). The non-graded elementary school. New Yo9rk: Harcourt Brace.

Levin, H. M. (1991). Building schoo1 capacity for effective teacher empowerment: Applications to elementary schools with at-risk students. Center for Policy Reserach in Education Research, Report Series RR-019. New Brunswidk: The State University of New Jersey.

Levin, H. M. (1992). Building capacity for accelerated schools. Accelerated Schools, 2(2), 1-3.

Lightfoot, S. L. (1983). The good high school: Portraits of character and culture. New York: Basic Books.

Maeroff, G. I. (1988). Withered hopes, stillborn dreams: The dismal panorama of urban schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 68(5), 633-638.

Maeroff, G. I. (1993). Building teams to rebuild schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 74(7), 513-519.

Murphy, J. (1991). Restructuring school capturing and assessing the phenomena. New York: Teachers College Press.

Staff. (1994, Fall). Emerging Leadership in Accelerated Schools. Accelerated Schools, 4(1), 1-17.

Schon, D. A. (1985). The reflective practioner: How professionals think in action. New York: Basic Books.

Wellington, B. (1991). The promise of reflective practice. Educational Leadership,48(6), 4-5.

Table 1

Patterns of Behavior

Unity of Purpose

1991-1992	1992-1993
A. Widespread Involvement	A. Groundwork for Involvement--Collaboration
1. Presence of Doubts	1. Doubting Thomas Teachers
2. How teachers got involved	2. Participation in Process
3. Advantages of Taking Stock	3. Opportunities through Taking Stock
B. Healing Divisions	B. Healing Divisions
1. Internal School/External Community	1. Internal School/ External Community
2. Signs of problems	2. Closing the gaps through reflection
3. Evidence of healing	3. Signs of healing